REMARKS

Claims 50-69 remain in this application. Claims 1-49 have been canceled, without prejudice. By these amendments, no new matter has been added.

The present invention provides a system and method for exchanging information within a group of users, that promotes the organization and accretion of topical knowledge available over a wide area network. Essentially, a system employing a method according to the invention will tend to accrete, organize and maintain knowledge in a potentially unlimited library of interrelated topics, thereby harnessing the combined knowledge of the group for efficient development and organization of knowledge, using the wide area network itself as a database. In general terms, the invention may be distinguished from the prior art by the backward-looking application of user ratings to the general organization of internet information resources for the creation of libraries and archives. Except in the more limited context of newsgroups, which have ultimately failed as usable information resources, the prior art simply overlooks the application of user communities to the organizing of reference information. Instead, the prior art has generally focused more on predicting the interests of users for the purpose of merchandising, or personalizing the delivery of news or search results. While these applications may also be worthwhile, they are distinct from the present invention.

More specifically, according to the present invention, members rate items of discrete information, including posts, links, web sites, files, or other remote resources in relation to a defined topic. Based on the rating data received from users, comparative relevance values for items of information are provided equally for users in the group. Members of the group are provided equal access to relevance data distilled from their peers, and information competes openly for the highest rating. More highly-valued information sources can be recognized and appropriately rewarded. These aspects of the invention are novel and patentable.

The Examiner rejected Claims 1-10, 12, 16-17, 29-35 and 41-44 under 35 U.S.C.

§ 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ginn in view of Bergh; and Claims 11, 13-15, 18-28, 36, and 45-49 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ginn in view of Bergh and further in view of Dunkle. Claims 1-49 are cancelled, and these rejections are therefore moot. Nor do the references Ginn, Bergh and Dunkle, or any other references of record, pose any bar to patentability of Claims 50-69 for the reasons explained below.

Claim 50 includes key elements of cancelled Claim 18, with certain elements deemed unnecessary to distinguish over the prior art being removed, and some other changes for the sake of clarification. The Examiner has already acknowledged the deficiencies of Ginn and Dunkle in connection with Claim 18. For example, these references fail to disclose or suggest the grouping of user posts and links to respective remote information resources (for example, other web pages) within the same topically organized information resource. Specifically, the Examiner acknowledged that "Ginn and Bergh do not specifically disclose providing on said Web page a plurality of links to a plurality of Web pages containing information relevant to said topic, in addition to said posts." (Office Action, ¶ 32.)

Ginn is limited to the collection of user ratings for user posts in the context of a message board. Ginn fails to disclose or to suggest numerous elements of Claim 50, including serving an information resource with both user posts and a plurality of links to remote information resources, receiving user ratings of the remote information resources, aggregating the user ratings, and providing them in association with the plurality of links.

Bergh discloses a collaborative filtering method primarily focused on predicting user interests through user profiling, for the purpose of recommending items to users. Bergh is not concerned with the development of information resources for a community of users, and fails to disclose or suggest anything that makes up for the deficiencies of Ginn that are noted above.

For its part, Dunkle also fails to make up for these deficiencies. Like Bergh,

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Dunkle discloses using a database of user information to predict which items of information are likely to be of interest to particular users. Dunkle fails to disclose or suggest serving an information resource with a plurality of links to remote information resources, receiving user ratings of the remote information resources, aggregating the user ratings, and providing them to users in association with the plurality of links, as defined by Claim 50. The Examiner cited Dunkle at col. 1, lines 24-39 and col. 3, lines 2-6 as disclosing "providing on said Web pages a plurality of links to a plurality of web pages containing information relevant to said topic, in addition to said posts." (Office Action at ¶ 32.) Applicants respectfully disagree. Dunkle at col. 1, lines 24-39 merely describes how web pages can be made interactive, such as by including interactive forms. At col. 3, lines 2-6, Dunkle describes providing users with an interactive form on which a user can indicate topics of information that are of interest to the user.

Polling users to determine their interests, as disclosed by Dunkle, in no way suggests the quite different processes defined by Claim 50. Dunkle fails to disclose or suggest receiving user ratings of web pages (or other remote information resources) signifying relevance of the remote information to a defined topic, aggregating the user ratings, and providing the aggregate ratings in association with links to the remote resources, as defined by Claim 50.

The Examiner further erred by stating that "Dunkle discloses providing said users an option to rate each of said plurality of Web pages linked to said Web page by said links [col. 5, lines 29-38]." (Office Action at ¶ 33.) To the contrary, the cited portion of Dunkle discloses the rating of articles for the collection of data "used to give the algorithm a deeper understanding of members' preferences and enable it to serve up more welcome headlines." (Col. 5, lines 31-34.) Thus, Dunkle discloses the gathering of rating data for its predictive value as to *future* information items for presentation to individual users. That is, Dunkle is concerned with personalizing the delivery of information. In contrast, the present invention is concerned with developing shared information resources for a community of users.

In view of the foregoing deficiencies of the references, Claim 50 is allowable over Ginn, Bergh and Dunkle.

Likewise, the Examiner has misapplied Dunkle with respect to cancelled Claims 20-28, 36, 45, and 46-49, as set forth in paragraphs 34-45 of the Office Action. While all of these claims are cancelled and the rejections are therefore moot, Dunkle poses no bar to patentability of any of new dependent Claims 51-69 such as may contain similar limitations. For example:

- With respect to Claims 51 and 54, Dunkle fails to disclose prioritizing (e.g., by ranking) links to reviewed information according to aggregated ratings data. In contrast, Dunkle discloses ranking of *future* items on user web pages, in line with its personalization objective. (See Office Action at ¶ 35.)

- With respect to Claims 59 and 60, Dunkle fails to disclose presenting the plurality of links to reviewed information resources on a menu. Figs. 10-16 and 17 of Dunkle show a plurality of links on a web page, but these links are to predicted future items of interest, but not to the reviewed information. (See Office Action at ¶¶ 36, 38.)

- With respect to Claim 66, Dunkle fails to disclose serving a reviewed web page (or other remote information resource) having a link back to the referring information resource. Fig. 17 does not show reviewed remote information resource as defined by Claim 66; instead, it shows a newly-created home page that has not been reviewed by users. Likewise, Dunkle at col. 1, lines 15-17 merely describes web surfing in general terms. (See Office Action at ¶ 40.)

Dunkle is deficient in other respects, as well, but it should not be necessary to point out its every deficiency. In general, dependent Claims 51-69 are allowable, at least because they all depend from an allowable base claim.

In view of the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 50-69 are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested, and a timely Notice of Allowability is solicited. If it would be helpful to placing this application in condition for allowance, Applicants encourage the Examiner to contact the undersigned counsel and conduct a telephonic interview.

To the extent necessary, Applicants petition the Commissioner for a one-month extension of time, extending to October 14, 2004, the period for response to the Office Action dated June 14, 2004. A check in the amount of $55.00 is enclosed for the one-month extension of time pursuant to 37 CFR §1.17(a)(1) and $395.00 for request for continued examination (RCE) pursuant to 37 CFR § 1.17(e). The Commissioner is authorized to charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-0639.

Respectfully submitted,

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